

JOHN & JAMES DOBSON CARPET MILL (WEST PARCEL),  
BUILDING NO. 7  
Philadelphia  
Philadelphia County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5383-F

HABS  
PA  
51-PHILA,  
695F-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
Mid-Atlantic Regional Office  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106

HABS  
PA  
51-PHILA,  
695F-

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY**  
**JOHN AND JAMES DOBSON CARPET MILL (West Parcel), BUILDING 7**  
**HABS No. PA-5383-F**

Location:

4041-4055 Ridge Avenue  
Philadelphia  
Philadelphia County  
Pennsylvania

Present Owner:

Rouse Urban Housing, Inc.  
1500 Walnut Street, 19th Floor  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102

Present Occupant:

Mixed commercial and industrial tenants.

Significance:

Building 7, constructed in 1875, housed the Brussels Carpet weaving room. The structure is significant as one of the mill buildings erected during the early stages of expansion at the mill. Its rubble construction and timber framing are characteristic of the complex. The later sawtooth roof monitors demonstrate the continuous adaptation of existing buildings in the complex to meet new technological changes.

## **PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

### **A. Physical History**

#### **Date(s) of Erection:**

1875, alterations circa 1888, 1894 and early twentieth century. The Hexamer Surveys from 1877, 1889 and 1894 document the erection and expansion of Building 7.

#### **Architect:**

Unknown.

#### **Original/Subsequent Owners:**

See Chain of Title.

#### **Builder, Contractor, Suppliers:**

Unknown.

#### **Original Plans/Construction:**

Building 7 was built in 1875 as a one-story stone building with a tin roof and monitor. It was constructed of the same rubblestone with brick segmental window arches as other buildings on the site. The building served as the Brussels Carpet weaving room.

#### **Alterations/Additions:**

Circa 1888, Building 7 was joined with a building to its north, then Building 8. This building, which had been constructed prior to 1875, was a one-story stone building with a tin roof that functioned as a winding and sizing house. When connected to Building 7, Building 8 continued to serve as a winding and sizing house but was expanded with washroom and drying facilities. In 1894, the original flat roof of Building 7 was reconstructed with a sawtooth roof. In the early twentieth century, the north section of the building was altered with the addition of a Colonial Revival entrance with pilasters and pediment. The original gable roof on this section was removed and a second story was added.

### **B. Historical Context**

Building 7 was built during the first major phase of building expansion at the Dobsons' mill. The building was constructed in order to house the weaving facilities of the Brussels Carpet Mill, then located in Building 1. The Dobsons' venture into carpet manufacturing proved successful and

paved the way for the mill's later production of plush fabrics. Building 7's architectural form and vocabulary are characteristic of the construction at the Dobsons' complex during this period. The sawtooth roof, added in 1894, reflects an architectural innovation introduced during this period to provide greater natural light and ventilation than the outmoded skylight and monitor systems.

## **PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION**

### **A. General Statement**

#### **Architectural Character:**

Building 7 is of the same rubble construction as the other buildings in the Dobson complex. Its brick segmental arches and timber framing are also typical.

#### **Condition of Fabric:**

The masonry of Building 7 is in generally good condition.

### **B. Description of Exterior**

#### **Overall Dimensions:**

SW elev.-168'; SE elev.-58.8'; SW elev.-15.6'; SE elev 21.2'; SW elev.-10'; SW elev.-10.8'; SE elev.-38'; SW elev.-3'; NE elev.-143.4'; NW elev.-16.8'; N elev.-90'; W elev.-94.8'.

#### **Foundations:**

Rubblestone.

#### **Walls:**

Rubble construction relieved with brick segmental window arches and sawtooth profiled upper story. Three sheds partially obscure the east elevation, two of brick, the other of metal.

#### **Structural System/Framing:**

Masonry construction with heavy timber framing.

#### **Porches/Stoops/Balconies/Bulkheads:**

None.

Chimneys:

None.

Openings:

Doorways/Doors:

East elevation- single entranceway. North elevation- modern corrugated metal doors, loading bay. Colonial Revival entrance on west elevation of northern section with pilasters, sidelights and pediment.

Windows/Shutters:

West elevation- window openings with brick segmental arches, mostly infilled or glazed with industrial steel sash. East elevation- to the south, seven bays of windows with brick segmental arches, to the north, four bays. South elevation- seven sections each fenestrated with three windows under segmental brick arches, most of the original wood window sash have been replaced with steel industrial sash and now contain metal louvers in their upper lights, at western end, door has been partially infilled to accommodate a window. North elevation- to the west, window bays fenestrated with three windows, most of which retain the upper sash of a 20/20 wood sash, lower portions have been infilled with cinder block and rubblestone, to the east, fourteen bays of steel sash windows covered by aluminum storm windows on the lower level, originally wood, now infilled.

Roof:

Main section of building to the south, saw-tooth monitor system supported by wood trusses. Addition to the north has a low pitched, gabled, built-up asphalt roof.

**C. Description of Interior**

Floor Plans:

The interior of the main section of the building is composed of industrial space roughly rectangular in shape. The addition to the north contains utilitarian open space in the rear and a turn of the century entry to the front. The second floor of this building houses a locker room and office.

Stairways:

There are four stairs in the building, two located along the northern elevation of the section, one located along the northern elevation of the addition and one housed in a stairwell at the western end of the addition.

Flooring:

Main section- concrete floor, addition- wood floors covered with modern materials.

Wall/Ceiling Finishes:

Main section-painted rubble walls and modern dropped ceiling, saw-tooth monitor visible in sections where ceiling is missing. Addition- painted plaster walls and plaster ceiling.

Openings:

Doorways/Doors:

No surviving original or historic interior doors.

Windows:

All windows recessed in unornamented plaster with no notable trim.

Decorative Features and Trim:

N/A.

Hardware:

Original hardware, which is no longer extant, is presumed to have been utilitarian in character.

Mechanical Equipment:

Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: See PA-5383-C for heating system, air conditioning is N/A, ventilation through roof monitors and rooftop ventilation units.

Lighting: Modern and strip fluorescent, ceiling mounted, lighting.

Plumbing: Early-20th-century ceiling mounted sprinkler fire suppression system.

## **D. Site**

### **General Setting/Orientation:**

Building 7 is located on the southern edge of the west parcel of the Dobson Mill complex and forms part of the almost continuous row of mill buildings fronting onto Ridge Avenue. Its primary facade faces north into the center of the west parcel.

### **Historic Landscape Design:**

See Historic Context Section.

### **Outbuildings:**

N/A.